

W. H. Richmond: Entrepreneur, Coal Baron, Philanthropist

By S. Robert Powell, Ph.D.

W. H. Richmond's entrepreneurial vision of the world made it possible for him to focus not only on retail sales from his highly profitable general store on Main Street in Carbondale in the period 1845-1865 but also on business opportunities related to the primary industries in the world around him in the Lackawanna Valley of Pennsylvania at the same time, railroads and anthracite mining, industries in which astonishing growth was then taking place.

As such he established in Carbondale—and operated up to 1861--a door and sash mill in which he made 800 Gravity Railroad coal cars (with the exception of axles and wheels) for the Delaware and Hudson Gravity railroad in Carbondale, and sashes for the Lackawanna Railroad shops at Scranton. When the D&H Gravity Railroad was extended four and one-half miles down the Lackawanna Valley from Archbald to Olyphant in 1859, knowledgeable and visionary real estate investors, such as W. H. Richmond, immediately bought potentially coal rich lands in that area, and in short order undertook exploratory mining initiatives there. To the immense financial benefit of those investors, extensive veins of high quality anthracite coal were discovered there, and in January 1860, W. H. Richmond formed a partnership with Charles Pemberton Wurts, superintendent of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company's railroad, and they commenced mining anthracite coal in Blakely township under the name of Richmond & Co.

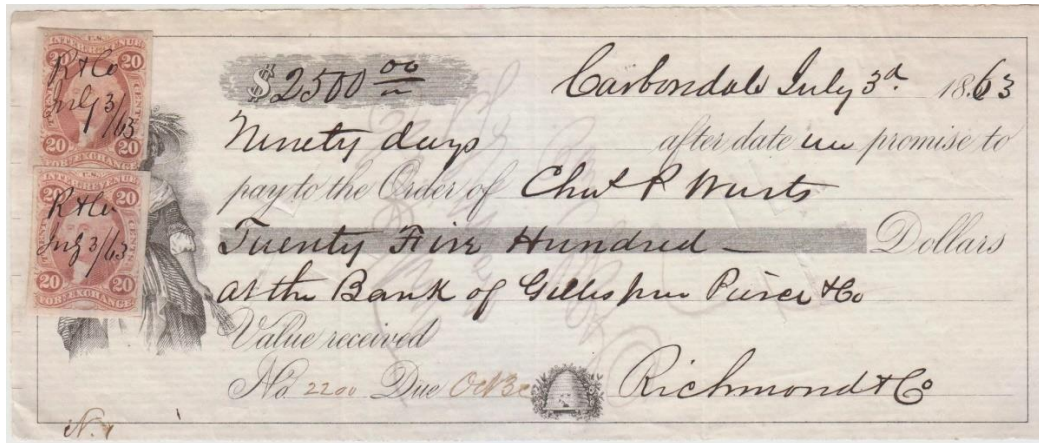
There, they erected one of the first coal breakers on the line of the D&H, Richmond No. 3 beaker. Previous to this time the D&H had shipped its coal in lump form as it came from the mines, running it over screens to clean the culm and waste from the coal. At Richmond No. 3, the practice of breaking, sorting, and thoroughly cleaning the coal for market was initiated by W. H. Richmond and C. P. Wurts.

On January 25, 1860, W. H. Richmond and C. P. Wurts entered into an immensely profitable agreement with the D&H (Thomas Dickson, Superintendent of D&H Coal Department), subject to the approval of D&H president George Talbot Olyphant (approved January 27, 1860) to sell the D&H 100,000 tons of coal in Blakely/Providence townships and deliver; 200 tons per day between, April 30 and December 1; delivery of coal to commence May 1, 1860.

The capacity of this colliery was a thousand or more tons per day of superior anthracite coal of every size. Coal from this breaker, Richmond No. 3, was loaded directly into Gravity-gauge coal cars, which were pulled by Gravity-gauge steam locomotives, to the foot of Plane No. 23 in Olyphant and sent to market in Honesdale via the D&H mountain Gravity railroad. (Historical note: In 1883 this coal breaker was destroyed by fire, and in the following year another was built in the second ward of Scranton, near the Brisbin colliery. This was sold in 1889, and another commenced on the ground in Dickson City where the first was located in 1860.)

In 1863, the W. H. Richmond and C. P. Wurts partnership in the Richmond No. 3 breaker and coal lands in Providence was dissolved when Richmond bought out C. P. Wurts' half of their partnership for \$2,500. Remarkably, the dissolution of partnership document between W. H.

Richmond and C. P. Wurts has survived to the present time. This rare and historically important document, shown here, is now in the collection of Cody Gonsauls, Childs, PA. The document: A promissory note / agreement, dated July 3, 1863, between Charles Pemberton Wurts and Richmond & Co. (W. H. Richmond), whereby W. H. Richmond agrees to pay, in the 90-day period following July 3, 1863, \$2,500 to the order of Charles Pemberton Wurts, at the Bank of Gillespie, Pierce & Co. in Carbondale.



Promissory Note / Agreement, dated July 3, 1863, between Charles Pemberton Wurts and Richmond & Co. (W. H. Richmond): \$2,500 payable to C. P. Wurts from W. H. Richmond at the Bank of Gillespie, Pierce & Co., Carbondale.

Not only is this promissory note of great importance as a document in coal mining history, it is, at the same time, an important document in the history of banking in the Lackawanna Valley of Pennsylvania in the nineteenth century for the very particular reason that it chronicles not only a financial transaction between Richmond and Wurts, but also because it explicitly documents the existence of Carbondale's first bank, the Bank of Gillespie, Pierce and Co. (which later became the First National Bank of Carbondale).

Shown here are portraits of Horatio Pierce (1817-1889), Thomas Gillespie (1804-1867), and James Stott (1817-1904), who founded, in 1856, the private Bank of Gillespie, Pierce and Co. (Exchange & Banking Office, at the corner of Main Street and Sixth Avenue in Carbondale). In 1864, Gillespie, Pierce and Co. became the First National Bank of Carbondale, with Horatio Pierce, Thomas Gillespie, and James Stott among the original directors of the First National Bank of Carbondale, the first officers of which were Horatio S. Pierce, President; John S. Law, Vice President; James Stott, Cashier. The original Directors of the First National Bank of Carbondale in 1864 (who owned 85% of the original stock) were: Horatio S. Pierce, James Stott, Thomas Gillespie, James Clarkson, William W. Bronson, Anthony Grady, John S. Law, Dwight N. Lathrope, and Louis Pughe.



The founders of the Bank of Gillespie, Pierce and Co., Carbondale, PA, were Horatio S. Pierce (1817-1889), Thomas Gillespie (1804-1867), and James Stott (1817-1904). In 1864, the Bank of Gillespie, Pierce and Co. became the First National Bank of Carbondale, PA. These portraits are all in the collection of the Carbondale Historical Society and Museum.

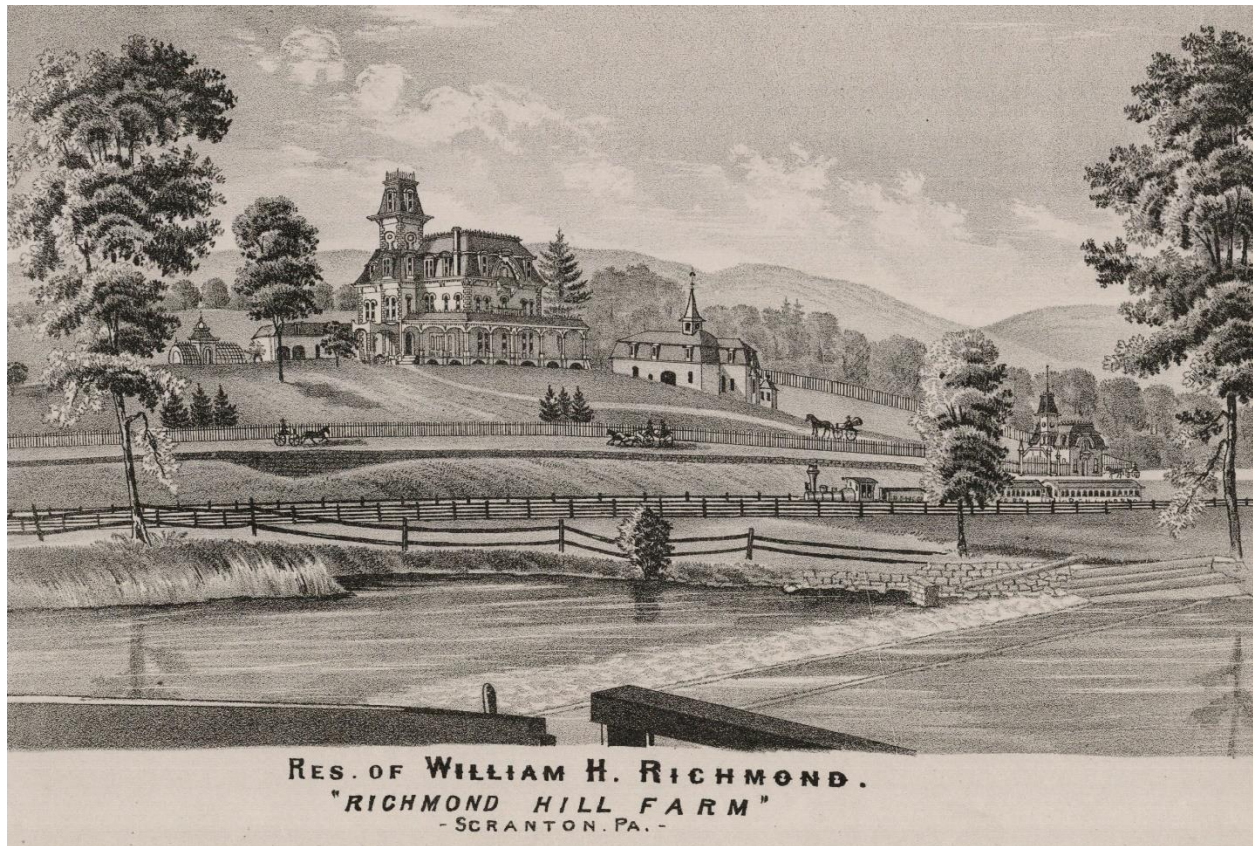
With the partnership between W. H. Richmond and Charles Pemberton Wurts thus dissolved (July 3, 1863), W. H. Richmond was now the sole owner of Richmond No. 3. The enterprise prospered and Richmond soon became the wealthiest independent coal operator in Lackawanna County.

In 1863 W. H. Richmond, Charles P. Wurts, George L. Morss, Alfred Wirtz, and G. L. Dickson organized the Elk Hill Coal and Iron Company, and succeeded to the ownership of Richmond No. 3 mine and breaker, with C. P. Wurts as president of the company and with W. H. Richmond as treasurer and manager. In 1864, C. P. Wurts withdrew and George L. Morss, brother-in-law of Richmond, became president and served until 1880, when Richmond became president of the company. The breaker continued to be a huge financial success for all concerned.

As a highly successful coal baron, W. H. Richmond (who married Lois R. Morss of Windham, Green Co., New York in 1849) then had built, in 1874, a stately Victorian mansion on 100 acres of ground in north Scranton (on North Main Avenue, near the Dickson City line), the Richmond Hill Farm.

Richmond Hill Farm was completed in 1874 and the Richmond family moved there from Carbondale on September 7, 1874. The farm was comprised of one hundred acres, and was described as follows in contemporary media: **"RICHMOND HILL FARM.** The elegant mansion of William H. Richmond, the treasurer of the Elk Hill Coal and Iron Company, completed in 1874, is a fine specimen of modern architecture and embodies some ideas of its owner that are well worthy of note, among which are its superior arrangements for heating by steam, the sensible location of registers at exposed points, a perfect and thorough ventilation, and a uniform heat secured at a very low pressure. Near this house are two spacious greenhouses, to the contents of which an experienced Scotch gardener is constantly adding; milk, carriage and boiler houses, and a fine poultry house and yard. In the barn yards may be seen the finest specimens of Jersey cattle, the importation and breeding of which is part of the business of the farm. Every part of the hundred acres is being bought under the best of treatment, and experiments in various crops afford the

owner employment for his leisure and the pursuance of his favorite theory of improving the farms in this vicinity. The English system of 'soiling' cattle is pursued, with satisfactory results."



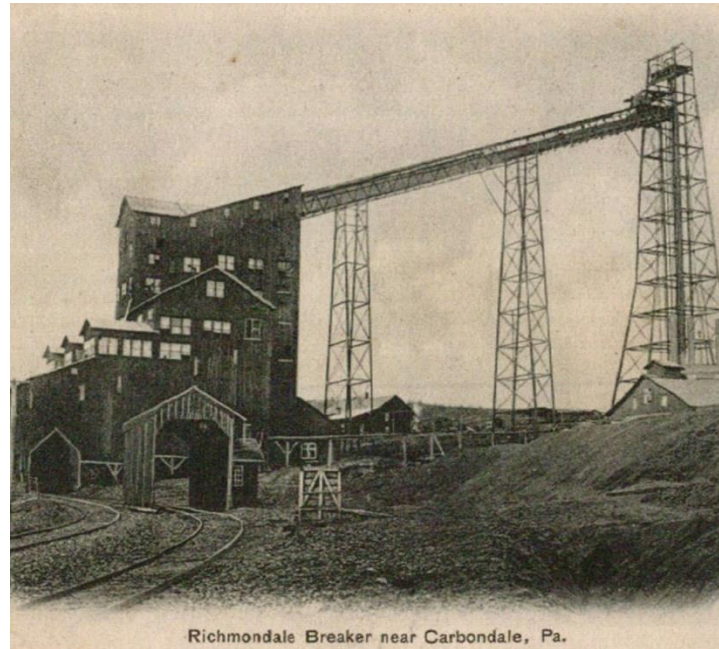
Richmond Hill Farm, the residence of William and Lois Richmond in Scranton, PA. In 1916, Richmond donated his residence and farm to the community for use as an educational institution, and today Richmond Hill Farm is the Orlando S. Johnson Manual Training School, Dickson City/Scranton, PA.

In 1916, Richmond donated his residence and farm to the community for use as an educational institution, and today Richmond Hill Farm is the Orlando S. Johnson Manual Training School (which was founded in 1912 with a trust fund established by Orlando S. Johnson, another wealthy coal operator of Scranton). In later years, through the generosity of C. S. Woolworth, A. H. Bingham, G. W. Weaver, and Robert Y. Moffat Sr., other buildings and facilities were erected on the grounds. Richmond's stately mansion has been beautifully preserved and serves today as the administration building of the school.

Richmond No. 4: Richmond continued to seek out and capitalize on investment possibilities in anthracite mining, and in 1891, he made a lease on one thousand acres of coal lands owned by the estate of the late George L. Morss, in Fell Township, about 5 miles above Carbondale and two and one-half miles southwest of Forest City.

The property was long under consideration as to whether it was desirable property for coal development. Richmond believed that it was, and the boring to 180 feet below the surface revealed the presence of an excellent vein of coal and fifty feet lower another vein. These strata were on the same plane as those of Forest City and Carbondale, and the quality of coal was the same as that shipped from the Hillside colliery and the Delaware & Hudson colliery at Clintonia.

A breaker was erected there, Richmond No. 4. The structure of this breaker was entirely different from that of all other coal breakers in the Lackawanna Valley and the design was highly praised when the structure was erected. This colliery had a capacity of fifteen hundred tons per day.



Richmondale Breaker near Carbondale, Pa.

Richmond Breaker No. 4, Richmondale, Susquehanna County, PA. The structure of this breaker, which was designed by W. H. Richmond, was entirely different from that of all other coal breakers in the Lackawanna Valley, and the design was highly praised when the structure was erected in 1901.

At Richmond No. 4, Richmond conceived the plan of putting up a steel tower over the shaft which was sunk some two hundred and twenty-two feet to two veins of coal seven and eight feet thick, and connecting the tower with the coal breaker two hundred and six feet away by a steel chute supported on two intermediate towers. The carriages were constructed of iron. They were hoisted to the top of the tower and the coal from the cars was dumped into a chute from whence it was conveyed by gravitation into the breaker. The chute through which the coal ran was four feet wide, and had walks along either side of two feet in width. The pitch of the chute was four and one half inches to a foot. At a height of one hundred and fifty feet, by automatic arrangement, the carriage and the car were tilted and the coal discharged into the chute, and it then gravitated to the large breaking rolls, and thence through the many screens to size the same and prepare it for shipment. One man was located at the point where the carriage was tilted who took the ticket from the car and directed the engineer, who was located in the engine room in a lean-to of the coal breaker, by

a signal bell to operate the carriage, which again went to the bottom of the mine, while another car ascended through the adjoining opening of the shaft with its load of coal. The steel tower was one hundred and eighty-seven feet high and about fifty feet square at the base. The steel chute was made necessary by reason of the mine laws of Pennsylvania, which stipulated that coal breakers must not be nearer than two hundred feet of the shaft. The design of the entire structure was arranged from plans conceived by W. H. Richmond. The breaker had a capacity of 1,500 tons daily. The coal from Richmond No. 4 was shipped by the New York, Ontario & Western Railway from a branch that ran off from the Northwest breaker, a distance of three miles. An autonomous mining community, Richmondale, developed around the breaker, where as many as one thousand miners and their families lived.



Mr. and Mrs. William H. Richmond, at home, Richmond Hill, in 1899

Richmond's financial success continued unabated. In August 1907 he sold to the D&H three tracts of land (44,920 feet) in North Scranton and Dickson City that were described in a clipping in a Gritman scrapbook, dated August 31, 1907, as follows: "The Delaware and Hudson Company has acquired more than 50,000 square feet of coal land located in North Scranton and Dickson City. Three tracts, consisting of 44,920 feet, located in North Scranton and Dickson City, were purchased outright from William H. Richmond and Lois R. Richmond, his wife. All the tracts are in close proximity to the tracks of the company, and it is said, connect with its present workings, so that they will easily be mined."

W. H. Richmond, whose entrepreneurial vision, intelligence, and work ethic made him a multimillionaire, lived to celebrate, in Daytona, FL, his 100th birthday (October 23, 1921). In the following year, he died, and his earthly remains were interred in the Richmond Mausoleum in the Dunmore Cemetery, Dunmore, PA.



The William H. Richmond Mausoleum, Dunmore Cemetery, Dunmore, PA

Dunmore Cemetery note: In the second half of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, the Dunmore Cemetery was widely regarded, notably by the socially elite, and by well-heeled entrepreneurs, industrialists, and railroad and mining officials, as the most desirable burying ground in the Lackawanna Valley. Throughout the cemetery, there are no less than twenty-five mausoleums and hundreds of deluxe/high end granite/marble monuments, many of which identify the final resting places of primary figures in the history of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad and the anthracite mining industry. Ten of those mausoleums/monuments mark the graves of major D&H and anthracite mining figures, namely: James Archbald, Thomas Dickson, William H. Richmond, Von Storch family (two mausoleums), Abraham H. Vandling, Simpson (Simpson & Watkins), John B. Smith (Pennsylvania Coal Company), John Jermyn, Colonel Henry Martyn Boies, and John Hosie.

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